DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 919 PS 011 749

AUTHOR Vaughn, Jane; Moran, James D., III
TITLE Interaction of Self-Concept, Television, and Leisure Activities in Families with Young Children.
PUB DATE Jun 80
NOTE 11p.: An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Home Economics Association (Dallas, TX, June 23-26, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Parent Child Relationship; *Preschool Children; *Recreational Activities; *Self Concept; Socialization; *Television Viewing

ABSTRACT

This study provides a profile of preschool children's leisure time activities and examines (1) whether preschool children's self-concepts are related to leisure time activities and (2) whether parental involvement in the leisure activities of children, including television viewing, are associated with higher levels of self-concept in children. The time expenditures of 55 preschool children were identified through the use of a parent interview and a week-long chart of the child's activities recorded by the parent. Time expenditures were correlated with self-concept scores of the children as measured by the Riley Inventory and a teacher rating scale. Significant relationships were found between self-concept and amount of one-to-one parent/child interaction, and between hours of television viewing and the amount of the child's solitary activities. In addition, self-concept scores were negatively related to amount of television viewing for males. The data were interpreted as indicating that the process of television viewing may not have a direct relationship to the child's self-concept. However, the data indicated that television may be related to other socialization processes in such a way as to indirectly influence self-concept and social development. (Author/SS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED192919

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Interaction of Self-Concept, Television, and Leisure Activities in Families with Young Children

Jane Vaughn
University of Oklahoma
and
James D. Moran III
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James D. Moran, III

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS011749

This paper is based on the master's thesis of the first author completed when both authors were in the School of Home Economics, University of Oklahoma. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the meeting of the American Home Economics Association, Dallas, June, 1980. Request for reprints should be sent to the second author at Department of Management, Housing and Family Development, VPI & SU, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Running head: Self-concept and TV

Abstract

This study provided a profile of preschool children's leisure time activities and focused on the relationships between television viewing, other leisure activities, and self-concept. Fifty-five preschool children (mean age = 52.4 months) and their families were voluntary participants for the study. Children's time expenditures were identified through the use of a parent interview and a week-long chart of the child's activities recorded by the parent. These time expenditures were correlated with self-concept scores of the children as measured by the Riley Inventory and a teacher rating scale. Significant relationships were found between self-concept and amount of one-to-one parent/child interaction, $r = 28$, $p < .03$, and hours of television viewing and the amount of the child's solitary activities, $r = .40$, $p < .002$. In addition self-concept scores were negatively related to amount of television viewing for males, $r = -.42$, $p < .04$. The data were interpreted as indicating that the process of television viewing may not have a direct relationship to the child's self-concept. However, the data indicated that television may be related to other socialization processes in such a way as to indirectly influence self-concept and social development.

Interaction of Self-Concept, Television, and Leisure Activities in Families with Young Children

Family recreational and leisure activities make an important contribution to the development of young children. Through these activities, children develop perceptual and motor skills, verbal concepts, and components of self-concept. Many parents, unaware of developmental processes, tend to view leisure as less worthy than work and thus do not attend to the structure and content of their child's leisure patterns. The need for parents to attend to leisure as it pertains to the developing child, however, is becoming recognized. The works of Hoban (1964) and Marzollo and Lloyd (1972), for example, focus on leisure activities as entertainment for young children while at the same time providing guidance for parents in understanding the complexity of these activities.

Young children acquire from their activities a perception of their abilities. This perception helps constitute the self-concept of the child. Many activities and experiences of young children have been investigated in attempts to identify the relationships of the child's activities to self-concept (Mundgren, 1975).

A primary leisure activity of young children involves television viewing. There have been many investigations concerning the effects of television content on children's behavior and patterns of learning (Friedrich & Stein, 1973; Hetherington, 1975; Liebert, Neale & Davidson, 1973; Robinson, 1969; Winn, 1977). Results of such studies have shown

the effects of television on a variety of behaviors, such as aggression towards others, prosocial behaviors, fear reduction, and acceptance of people of other cultures. Both positive and negative effects of television have been demonstrated as a function of program content. Another factor involved in the use of television as a leisure activity, however, focuses on the concern over the process of television viewing. Concern has been voiced regarding the displacement of other activities because of excess viewing time (Schramm, Lyle & Parker, 1961), the lack of contact with real people (Bettelheim, 1960), the confusion of real fantasy worlds (Noble, 1975), and a concern for altered family patterns. Bronfenbrenner (1973) suggests that one of television's major deteriments is that television interferes with family interaction by focusing attention on the screen rather than other people.

This concern for the influence of television on the child's socialization has drawn the interest of other researchers. Gadberry (1974), for example, found television viewing to be associated with significantly less talking, walking, and maternal control. She implied that use of the television medium might affect parental socialization practices since less parental interference occurred during viewing along with less behavior which was potentially reinforceable.

Activities chosen by young children express their needs for a variety of experiences to enhance social competence and allow practice in gaining cognitive, physical, and emotional skills. This study examines whether self-concept is related to leisure activities of young

children and parental involvement in those activities. It was anticipated that parental involvement in the leisure acitivties of children, including television viewing, would be associated with higher levels of self-concept in children.

Method

Subjects. The sample was composed of 55 three-, four-, and five-year-old children who were involved in a community Park and Recreation preschool program and their parents. The average age of the children was 52.4 months with a range of 37 to 66 months. The sample was composed of 25 boys and 30 girls and constituted 55% of the children enrolled in the program. For this study only families consisting of two parents with one or more children and at least one parent employed were included. From the parent interviews it was determined that parents of the children were employed in traditionally middle-class occupations and most had at least a high school education.

Instruments. A parent interview (adapted from Friedrich & Stein, 1975) was used to obtain demographic data for sample identification. In addition, information concerning family routines and daily activities of the child was also obtained. Parents were also asked to record their child's activities over a one week period. A schedule chart for recording the child's daily activities was developed for the study. The parent recorded what the child did each day for seven days in half-hour intervals.

Two methods of self-concept assessment were used in this study. The first measure was the Make-A-Boy (Girl) portion of the Riley Preschool

Developmental Screening Inventory (Riley, 1969). On this scale, to obtain information on self-concept, each child is asked to draw a self-portrait and the drawing is scored via protocols developed by Riley. Coller (1971) reports the Riley scale to be a measure of general self-concept in preschool children. As a validity check on the Riley scale, a teacher assessment scale was also developed. On this scale, teachers rated students on six descriptive phrases related to self-concept. Analysis showed that these two scales were significantly correlated, $r = .26$, $p < .04$, providing some support for the validity of the Riley with this sample.

Procedure. Both the child and at least one parent (most often the mother) met the researcher in a room at the recreation center where the child attended the program for the interview and self-concept evaluation. The child was directed to a small table near the adults where toys and drawing supplies were available. All interviews were conducted by a female examiner. When the parent interviews were completed, the parent was provided with instructions regarding the time schedule chart. The parent then left the room while the examiner proceeded to administer the Riley scale to the child. Upon completion of the self-concept scale, the parent returned to the room and any questions about the daily activities chart were answered. Parents were requested to return the chart in seven days. Six families did not complete the chart, or failed to return it, and were consequently excluded from the study leaving a sample of 55 families.

Random telephone calls were made during the project to encourage time charting and to check for accuracy of recording. All families contacted reported to be completing the charts correctly.

Results and Discussion

Data were analyzed via analysis of variance and Pearson product-moment correlations. Analysis revealed significant differences in the pattern of leisure activities of the children, F (3,156) = 36.81, $p < .0001$, with playmate activities (34.7%) ranking as the predominant activity, followed by family activity (26.3%), solitary activity (13.5%) and one-to-one parent/child activity (9.5%). A distinct pattern was also found in television viewing activities of the children, F (3,156 = 44.26, $p < .0001$. Children spent most of their viewing time with other children (54.8%), a considerable amount of time was spent in solitary viewing (27.5%), a smaller percentage of time in family viewing (13.7%) and very little time spent in parent/child viewing (4.0%).

The relatively low amount of parent/child interaction time is cause for concern because parent/child activities appear to be important in building and maintaining positive self-concepts. Self-concept was found, to be significantly related to parent/child leisure interaction, $r = .28$, $p < .03$. These children, however, spent the lowest percentage of their time in this type of interaction.

When self-concept scores for males were considered, Riley scores were found to be negatively related to percentage of leisure time spent viewing television, $r = -.42$, $p < .04$, and somewhat related to hours of television viewing, $r = -.34$, $p < .08$. The Riley scale also indicated a significant relationship between self-concept scores and parent/child television viewing experiences for males, $r = .49$, $p < .01$, and a nearly

significant relationship for females, $r = .35$, $p < .06$. This latter finding is important in the consideration of family interaction patterns. It is certainly not surprising that self-concept is associated with a viewing environment that even the television industry argues is optimum. Perhaps the amount of television viewed is not as crucial as is the viewing environment. For most children, however, the vast majority of hours spent watching television are without the presence of an adult. Furthermore, it should be noted that a significant relationship was found between hours of television viewed and the amount of leisure time spent alone, $r = .40$, $p < .002$. Thus the possibility exists that children who watched more television tended to have fewer interactions with other people.

Our research indicated that relationships do exist between leisure activities (such as television), parents' involvement in those activities and young children's self-concepts. Whether self-concept influences how television is viewed or whether television viewing influences self-concept is unknown. The findings do suggest that as the amount of television viewing increases, so does leisure time spent in solitary activities. For males, it appears that the amount of television viewing has a negative relationship to self-concept. Although the precise cause/effect relationship cannot be determined from this study, we are concerned that the findings might suggest that excessive television viewing leads to less interaction with others and thus lower self-concepts in these young children. Parents may need to evaluate the amount of television their children watch

in order to accurately estimate television's influence upon their children's activities. If television viewing limits children's social experiences, parents and other adults involved with the socialization of children need to be aware of possible problems related to social development.

The data also suggest that parental involvement in both general leisure activities and television viewing is related to self-concept. The optimum teaching environment may be the one-to-one parent/child interaction. Yet this type of interaction is least frequent in the child's world. Many children may not be receiving the necessary familial interaction to enhance self-concept. Self-concept development is an important feature during the preschool years. Although the basis for self-concept is related to the feelings of trust and security an infant develops from birth, self-concept enhancement programs and techniques can be utilized by parents to assist children in becoming responsible and successful members of society. Educators must also be cognizant of children's self-concepts and remember that the better children feel about themselves, the more willing they are to attempt new or different skills and investigate the unknown.

References

Bettelheim, B. The informed heart. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Bronfenbrenner, V. Two worlds of childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R. New York: Pocket Books, 1972.

Friedrich, L. K., & Stein, A. H. Aggressive and prosocial television programs and the natural behavior of preschool children. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 1973, 38 (4, Serial No. 151).

Friedrich, L. K., & Stein, A. H. Prosocial television and young children: The effects of verbal labeling and role play on learning and behavior. Child Development, 1975, 46, 27-38.

Gadberry, S. Television as a babysitter: A field comparision of preschooler's behavior during play time and during television viewing. Child Development, 1974, 45, 1132-1136.

Hetherington, G. M. Impact on TV on children and youth. Child Development Research, 1975, 46, 323.

Hoban, R. Nothing to do. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Liebert, L. M., Neale, J. M., & Davidson, E. S. The early window: Effects of television on children and youth. New York: Pergammon Press, 1973.

Marzollo, J., & Lloyd, J. Learning through play. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Mundgren, R. H. Self-concept and social competency in young children. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, 1974). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1975, 35, 2057B-2058B.

Noble, G. Children in front of the small screen. London: Constable, 1975.

Riley, C. M. Riley Preschool Developmental Screening Inventory. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services, 1969.

Robinson, J. P. Television and leisure time: Yesterday, today and (maybe) tommorow. Public Opinion Quarterly, 1969, 33, 210-233.

Schramm, W., Lyle, J., & Parker, E. B. Television in the lives of our children. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961.

Winn, M. The plug in drug. New York: Viking, 1977.